

## 2007 Legislative Support from Preveterinary Club at Montana State University

Hello my name is Chelsey Johnson and I am here with the Pre-vet Club at Montana State University to show our support for the WICHE program. I am currently a senior and I will finish my degree in Biological Sciences in the spring along with my final preparations for veterinary school for which I will apply in the fall of 2007. I grew up on a third generation ranch in St. Ignatius, Montana and I hope to return to that area to work as a vet when I am finished with my schooling.

When I apply for vet school I will also hope to receive some financial assistance through the WICHE program. WICHE has been in place since 1953 and since 1993, 82 individuals have been supported and received aide through WICHE (Mattix). This support has allowed Montana natives to attend veterinary school at a cost that is feasible for them to do so.

In the next ten years the job market for veterinarians in Montana is expected to grow by about 33 openings a year which is as fast as the national growth at about 12.5% (Occupational Outlook Handbook). This growth will provide anywhere from 178-198 veterinary positions across the state in the next ten years (Montana Job Projections). Currently the state supports 9 students a year through the WICHE program in ten years the program will have supported 90 students, helping them become veterinarians when it may not have been financially feasible for them to do so without assistance. WICHE is not a program that will supply the state of Montana with vets for the next ten years, but it is a program who's support is crucial for Montana natives who are aspiring to be veterinarians in the communities they know and love. There is a demand in Montana for veterinarians, and who better to serve this demand than fellow Montanan's.

Vets in Montana are a crucial aspect of our economy, they support our agriculture community by providing the cattle industry with care that allows our cattle to be the number one agriculture commodity of our agriculture industry, bringing in around \$1,104, 387 a year in cash receipts, nearly half of all agriculture receipts (Montana by the Numbers). Veterinarians also provide jobs, pay back to the state in taxes, and support the community in numerous other ways. I am looking forward to being able to give back to my community by providing exceptional veterinary care both for companion animals as well as livestock.

Thank you very much for your time and attention, it is my pleasure to introduce Dael Householder who will elaborate on the financial aspects of becoming a veterinarian...

### *Works Cited By Johnson*

*Mattix, Rebecca. Personal records.*

*Montana by the Numbers. Montana Department of Commerce.*

*<http://ceic.mt.gov/MtByNumb.asp>*

*Montana Job Projections (2004-2014). Montana Department of Labor and Industry.*

*[http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/admin/uploadedPublications/1665\\_Projections\\_2014\\_Web.pdf](http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/admin/uploadedPublications/1665_Projections_2014_Web.pdf)*

*Occupation Outlook Handbook (2006-2007). US Department of Labor.*

*<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos076.htm>*

Thank you, Chelsey. Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the committee. My name is **Dael Householder**. I am a fourth generation rancher from Ismay, MT and have an active interest in Montana's cattle industry. As a junior at Montana State University studying animal science, I

applied to veterinary school this last fall. WICHE has made it possible for me to pursue a career in veterinary medicine as it has for many Montana students.

The expense of attending an out of state veterinary program reduces the feasibility of students returning to Montana to practice. WICHE improves the student's financial situation upon completing veterinary school increasing the practicality of practicing here. There is an average difference of \$84k over 4 years in tuition costs between WICHE supported and non-supported students based on 2006-07 estimated costs of Oregon State University, Washington State University, and Colorado State University.<sup>1,2,3</sup> In addition to tuition costs, the cost of living average for these three cities is approximately \$35k per year.<sup>4</sup> Over the four year period of veterinary school, the combined cost of tuition and living expenses is equivalent to \$200k for supported students and \$284k for non-supported.

According to Colorado State University, the average debt of a veterinary school graduate is \$88k.<sup>5</sup> An average veterinarian's salary in Montana is 70% that of the United States average salary.<sup>6</sup> 15% of a Montana salary per year will pay off the debt in 11 years. The United States salary would pay off the debt in 7.5 years. This does not include the interest on the debt. The ability to repay debts in a timely fashion becomes a reason to choose other locations than Montana to begin practice. WICHE equalizes the time to repay debts because of a lower financial burden upon the supported student, leading to a higher probability it is financially feasible to return to Montana to practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. To further show the importance of WICHE in relation to return rates of Montana residents to practice veterinary medicine in the state, I will now turn the podium over to Kiser Hardaway.

Thank you, Dael.....Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the committee. My name is **Kiser Hardaway**, I am currently a sophomore at Montana State University, and I am studying Animal Science with the intention of applying to veterinary school within the next couple of years.

As you all know, agriculture is one of the leading industries in the state of Montana. A vital component of the agriculture industry is livestock. Veterinarians in this state play an important role in the health and production of this industry, specifically large animal veterinarians. Currently there are 468 veterinarians listed with the AVMA in the state of Montana (1). Out of these 468 veterinarians, 246 practice some aspect of large animal medicine, roughly 53% (1). Of the 246 large animal veterinarians, 146 have been in practice more than 20 years. The WICHE program makes it possible for Montana residents to attend a veterinary school of medicine, and return to the state replacing veterinarians who will be retiring shortly. 252 veterinarians listed with the AVMA graduated from a WICHE sponsored school. We conducted a state wide survey that was sent to all 468 AVMA listed veterinarians to find out what their views are on the support of WICHE and the importance of sending Montana Students out of state to attend a credited veterinary school with a reasonable cost. There were 154 veterinarians who responded to our survey, the WICHE program made it possible for 76 of them to attend a vet school (2). One of the questions asked in our survey was "Do you feel that 9 WICHE spots is adequate", 51 of the veterinarians stated that 9 spots were not enough to meet the future needs of the state (2).

It is crucial for the state of Montana to maintain the current 9 WICHE spots. WICHE makes it possible for Montana students to attend a veterinary school, and return to the state and replace those who will be looking for replacements. From the research we uncovered we will be asking Dr. Sterns to increase veterinary slots in the next biennium budget in order to maintain Montana's title of an agricultural state.

*Work Cited by Hardaway*

1. *American Veterinary Medical Association. (2006). 2006 AVMA Membership Directory & Resource Manual. Division of Membership and Field Services. pg. 809-812.*
2. *Personal survey conducted by the Pre-Vet Club at Montana State University, spring of 2006.*

Total DVM's in the state	468	
Total DVM's by WICHE school	252	53.85%
Total DVM's in large animal	246	52.56%
Total large animal in practice for > 20 years	146	59.35%
Total responses of WICHE Survey	154	
Total WICHE sponsored	76	49.35%
# of responses who feel current # of WICHE spots are not adequate	51	33.12%
# of responses who will be or are retired in next five years	33	21.43%
<b>TOTAL WICHE STUDENTS SUPPORTED SINCE 1993</b>	<b>74</b>	
<b>TOTAL WICHE STUDENTS RETURNED TO MONTANA SINCE 1993</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>40%</b>